. 1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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ized sect adopted a number of critical Hindu symbols of rank, such as wearing the sacred thread. They were said to "regard themselves as socially superior to those who do not wear *suta* (Hindi = sacred thread). The "*janeo dhari* Santal [those who wear the sacred thread] are reluctant to intermarry or have social intercourse with the non-*janeo dhari* Santal."[16] This sect also adjured meat-eating. A prime motivation for the sect's adoption of such practices must have been to attain higher rank.

Both schisms and solidarity in the period shortly after the rebellion are described by Dalton:

> Santals who are under the example and precept of Bengali Hindus have abjured some practices considered impure by the latter and are called Sat Santal, that is, pure Santal; but there is a national antagonism between them [the Santal] and the Hindus that prevents any close fraternization or communion between the races. They are not over particular about food, but nothing will induce them to eat rice cooked by a Hindu, even a Brahman. Unfortunately, during the famine of 1866 this was not known to us. The cooks who prepared the food distributed at the relief center were all Brahmans and it was supposed that this would suit all classes, but the Santals kept aloof and died rather than eat from the hands so hateful to them.[17]

Dalton has somewhat overdrawn the reluctance of the Santal to fraternize with Hindus, but the event he describes and the tenor of his remarks regarding the hatred and fear that the Santal have of Hindu conform with all other reports.

The simultaneous attraction and resistance to the Hindu world appears in the remarks of a sophisticated northern Santal

[16] Majumder 1956:62.
[17] Dalton 1872:214

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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who in 1871 spoke in words almost identical to those one often hears today among the Santal; he says, "We only watch at Hindu festivals [we should only watch]; but as these festivals do not belong to us, Santal do not act rightly [in] offering to the *boṅga* (deities) of other races. On account of this our *boṅgas* are angry with us; it becomes like the state of having a wife and a co-wife, we are not making anybody satisfied."[18] Regarding specific borrowings from the Hindus, this same Santal says, "From the *Dekos* we have from time to time taken over many festivals; but among these there is only one festival that the whole village celebrates, viz., the Karam." He explains that on this occasion the offerings include certain flowers, sun-dried paddy, a type of grass, oil, and vermilion, i.e., the offerings are typically Hindu. They are presented to the Hindu deities Karmu and Dharmu.

> At other festivals taken from the *Dekos*, only the man who celebrates it, worships, and we go to look at it; we do not worship. At the Durga festival such people offer to Durga, at the Kali festival they offer to Kali, at the Monsa festival they offer to Monsa, at the Chata festival they offer to the Chata boṅga, at the Pata festival they offer to Mahadeb and at the Jatra festival they offer to Ransig, the Jatra boṅga.[19]

Though the Karam festival was certainly taken from the Hindus, it is not the only Hindu ceremony which the Santal communally celebrate. Various other ceremonies practiced in the nineteenth century and today are similar to Hindu cere-

[18] Bodding, 1942:158.
[19] Bodding *ibid.*:158.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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Chapter 8 The Theory of the RCS

> Solidarity which comes from likenesses is at its maximum when the collective conscience completely envelops our whole conscience and coincides in all points with it. But, at that moment, our individuality is nil. It can be born only if the community takes smaller toll of us. There are, here, two contrary forces, one centripetal, the other centrifugal, which cannot flourish at the same time. We cannot, at one and the same time, develop ourselves in two opposite senses. —If our ideal is to present a singular and personal appearance, we do not want to resemble everybody else.[1]

Santal historical experience suggests certain processes which may be applicable to all encysted societies which have conceded rank to a dominant surrounding society. It is these processes which I call the "rank concession syndrome" (RCS). "Rank concession" means the acceptance of social inferiority. "Acceptance" is an unfortunately ambiguous term, for it may occur in various degrees and perhaps even in a variety of forms.

[1] Durkheim 1933:130.

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

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186 Nevertheless, to whatever degree and in whatever form such
121 acceptance occurs, the syndrome becomes operative.

177 The evidence of Santal rank concession is manifold. It will
186 be recalled that the earliest historical evidence shows the Santal adopting and abandoning traits on the basis of their rank value in Hindu society. The acceptance of alien rank values can hardly ensue without rank concession. The Santal themselves say that "the *diku* are big and knowing people" and their demeanor as they interact with Hindus, particularly of high caste, confirms acceptance in fair measure of their inferior status. Even today, in a period of renewed solidarity, the Santal are striving to "raise themselves" to the level of the "*diku*," as they say. The term *diku* is, of course, evidence enough of the ambivalence of the concession, and the history of Santal-Hindu relations has provided the Santal with sufficient reason to hate and fear as well as admire their Hindu neighbors. The earliest historical information indicates not only that rank concession must have begun considerably before British control, but that it was particularly pronounced among the traditional Santal elite. There is, for example, the myth of the Kisku king who became a Hindu and was forsaken by his fellows and the myth of Santal society constructed as a set of functionally specialized castes with each clan occupying a caste position.

To accept inferior status is to accept the attributes of rank of the superior society, and such acceptance produces a tendency to emulation. This emulation is an effect of rank concession, and evidence for it as well. The many examples noted of Santal emulation of the dominant Hindu society are to be understood as arising from the universal tendency of societies which have conceded rank to emulate. They may also be regarded as supporting evidence, to indicate rank concession, though rank

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

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177 concession can be independently observed in Santal social rela-
• 186 tions with Hindus as well as inferred from Santal comments about the social superiority of the *diku*.

121 Such an emulative tendency, if put into practice, may at first
177 lead to gross copying. Without internalization of emulative
186 attitudes it is not likely to accomplish its objective and results
554 in the kind of imitation epitomized by the *nouveau riche*. Such behavior appears gauche and thereby generates its own tendency toward internalization. Emulation may be directed toward attaining rank in interaction with social units belonging to the dominant society or within one's own society.

To concede that another society is more powerful is not tantamount to conceding it superior rank. Such a power concession generates its own borrowing tendencies, which might be termed "power incorporative borrowing," since it involves regarding the more powerful society's traits as possessing a special efficacy, which arises by projecting onto these traits the power of the dominant society. But while power concession does not imply rank concession, rank concession is almost always accompanied by and therefore implies power concession. Rank concession will therefore always be associated with both emulation and power incorporative borrowing. Emulation and power incorporation are often intermingled in particular acts and serve to maintain borrowed practices as well as to generate new borrowings. Power incorporation appears in its purest form in Santal curing practices, whose end is primarily curing efficacy or the belief in such efficacy, though the prestige which accrues to the practitioner who employs borrowed practices is
[755] not without significance. For example, one commonly hears Bengali and Oriya songs and Sanskritic prayers as essential elements in curing rites, though often even the practitioner

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
AW42 Santal AW42

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177 does not understand the words. Such practices could hardly
186 have been borrowed because of a peculiar "fit" of their content
554 with traditional Santal patterns. Certainly such practices are not
755 naturalistically more efficacious. It is rather a case of connecting status and efficacy which is expressed in the Santal reference to Hindus as "*big* and *knowing* people."

121 There is a third reason for the tendency to adopt practices
177 of the dominant society, one which follows almost inevitably
186 from the condition of being encysted. This is the "external
648 pressure" brought to bear by the dominant society on the encysted society to adopt its customs. The basis for the near inevitability of this pressure is nothing less than the solidarity needs of the dominant society. Surrounding dominant societies must demand allegiance to at least the official symbols of suzerainty; acceptance of a number of other customs is likely also to be demanded as the solidarity needs of the dominant society increase. There are likely also to be a number of customs of the encysted society which the superior society finds repugnant, a reaction which invariably creates some pressure for "reform" of the encysted society. The pressures exerted on the encysted society may include positive rewards for compliance or coercive acts by police or even by an army.

648 Perhaps the oldest and most continuous of such pressures
782 on the Santal has been governmental interference with Santal cow sacrifice and beef eating. Armed interference has been practiced everywhere and has not ceased under present democratic conditions. Cow sacrifice has continued, but in secret so as to avoid prosecution and interruption of the rites. However, some villages, fearing arrest and harassment, have abandoned such sacrifice, particularly where there are Hindus in the village who might report this activity to the authorities. There is no

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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SANTAL PARGANAS

bani, Bara Palassy and Pipra areas of Santal Parganas, the special puja to Kali in the Dumka Subdivision, the assemblage *en masse* of the Santals in the past to sing and dance during Hindu festivals, have very deep implications that these are broad-based on a synthesis peculiar to Indian culture.

The infiltration made itself positively felt in the Santal Parganas in 1871, with variants repeated in 1942, when many Santals declared themselves as *Safa-hor* (the pure men) after eschewing fowls, pigs, and intoxicating liquor but taking to *Ganja* (hemp, *Canabis Sativa*) and tried to bring it on a line with Hindu practices. It led for a time to some social ferment and had also political repercussions. This impact may be corroborated by a reference to the Census Report of 1931, when 586,499 Santals declared themselves as Hindus in Bihar and Orissa; and in the state of Mayurbhanj, 154,596 were returned as such. Added to these, there were movements for reclamation of the Santal to the Hindu fold, specially in Rajmahal, Balurghat and other areas. In 1936, it was claimed in the Santal Parganas, that due to their very recent activities (of the Hindu Mission), about a lakh of Santals came to the Hindu fold. In those times, we have seen, the Santals came to the Durgasthan at Dumka, to worship the goddess in their own rights as Hindus. They would recall that in their traditions and insti-

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4, 6 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
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They would recall that in their traditions and institutes it was clearly stated that the early Santals (known as *Kharwars* then) had helped Ram Chandra to win the battle of Lanka against Ravana. In huge Santal rallies (held to declare themselves as Hindus) such speeches were heard, "Sri Ram Chandra used bows and arrows as we do. Sri Krishna was dark like us and played on the lute and tended cattle as we do. Why are we not Hindus?. We are." One irresistibly felt that here was the heart-throb of the Santal for centuries.

All these synchronised with a new awakening amongst the educated and enlightened Santals which culminated in the formation of organisations to maintain their social and political interests. One such, the *Hor Malto Marang Sabha*, was formed as early as 1932 on the initiative of E. S. Hoernle, I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner of the Santal Parganas. In course of time, it exerted a real influence on the government and the tribal people. The part that it played in safeguarding the rights of Santal tenants of Monghyr in the Bihar Tenancy Act was a creditable one as it secured his right against the disposal of his holding to *mahajans*. Gradually, however, a political programme came to the fore and such a bias was noticeable in the Adibasi Mahasabha, soon to follow at Ranchi. It sought to unify, at least the Proto-Australoids like the Santals, Mundas, Kharias, the Ho etc. in a

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

CHAPTER VII

Culture Contact

177 [128] In the concluding chapter I would like to assess the effect of the impact of alien cultures on the life and customs of the Santals of Santal Parganas.

175 648 The Santals according to O'Malley[1] came from Birbhum and first settled in the Santal Parganas between 1790 and 1810. Outside Santal Parganas the Santals had contact with the Hindus but this contact was not very pleasant. They were oppressed by the [186] Zamindars and Mahajans to such an extent that even now they call such non-Santals as "Diku" (those who trouble them). In the Santal Parganas also they were oppressed by the Zamindars and Mahajans, and when this oppression was unbearable in 1855 they became rebellious. After the rebellion the Government declared it as a restricted area. No body without the permission could enter the area. From this it appears that the contact 175 177 of the Santals with the Hindus in the Santal Parganas 648 in the beginning was not cordial. Naturally the Santals at that time could not have borrowed much culturally from the Hindus. They rather tried to stick to their old customs which would preserve their entity and maintain unity in their rank.

175 **Alien Religious Movements and their effect on the Santal** 177 **religion**: From the earliest records it appears that not much Hindu influence operated in the Santal Parganas to convert them, except for the Kharwar

1. Bengal District Gazetteers (Santal Parganas).

St Culshaw M-S (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

CHAPTER 2

THE SANTAL AND HIS NEIGHBOURS

WHATEVER difficulty there may be for others, the Santals make a clear distinction between themselves and Hindus, whom they call *Deko*. The basis of distinction is race rather than religion. The prevailing Indian identification of race with religion has caused some confusion in their minds, but the fact that about 50 per cent. of Santals were returned in 1931 as Hindus and most of the remainder as followers of tribal religion indicated the heightened political consciousness of the enumerators more than any real division within the tribe. In many areas the returns depended entirely on the views of the enumerator and his reading of the issues at stake. The census gave rise to discussions in Santal villages, during the course of which one Santal said: "I am a Santal; I can become a Christian or a Moslem, but I cannot become a *Deko*." When speaking among themselves the Santals usually refer to Hindus as *Deko pusi*. *Pusi* in Santali means a cat, and the term is usually reserved for the higher Hindu castes. An old man explained it thus: "The *Deko* are very greedy and cunning, and that is why they are called *pusi*. Whenever a cat sees that someone else has milk, curds, fish or any bits of food, he roams around with his 'mew-mew', and as soon as he sees an opportunity he pounces on the food and finishes it off. The *Deko* go round like that, looking out for opportunities. They make friends with the Santals, give them beer and spirits to drink, and deceive them when they are drunk—for the Santals have no sense: they are like sheep. They will go wherever a *Deko* wishes them to go, for they do not have a good command of the *Deko* language." In this description many elements in the attitude adopted towards the *Deko* find expression. The Santal feels superior and gives free rein to his contempt; at the same time he has good reason to be afraid, and he accords a grudging admiration to the cleverness of the *Deko*. There is even a certain good-humoured acceptance of the situation in which the Santal finds himself, for cats are found in every Santal home, and they are valued for their uses, though not regarded with great affection.

Santals are not free from that common fallacy of mankind which looks upon one's own kind as superior to all others and the rest of the world as "queer". *Deko* smell different, and one particular caste smells more than others. Some day, they feel,

St Culshaw M·5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

the tables may be turned on those who lord it over them. In Bolding's collection of the Folk-Tales[1] there are two stories which turn on the fact that the bodies of high-caste strangers house the souls of animals, while the bodies of men of low caste house human and beautiful souls. (The means by which the real person can be discerned is to look at him through the wing feather of a vulture.) In common with other tribes of their group and many primitive peoples in other parts of the world, the Santals refer to themselves as "men" (*hor*). A Santal once said in reply to a direct question as to whether any other race was superior to his: "No, there are no others who are greater than us. You can see that from the fact that even today our womenfolk will not eat rice that has been cooked by Brahmins. Formerly, when our menfolk ate Hindu rice they were made to sleep outside for one night; they could not sleep with their wives. When they brought rice from outside to the house they were made to eat it in the courtyard and clean up the place where they had eaten, and then wash their own eating utensils." Many Santals work as day labourers in the fields of well-to-do caste Hindus and receive payment in grain or sometimes in cooked food. The cooks in the homes of their employers are Brahmins, and so by refusing to acknowledge the supremacy of the Brahmin they hold themselves aloof from the Hindu social structure. Nevertheless, the complete aloofness of former days has been modified and is maintained only by the women. As one might expect, Santals share with others abhorrence of social customs which do not agree with their own standards of morality, and they exaggerate the iniquities practised by other peoples. The same person said: "When the *Deko* put out their lamps at night they have no sense of what is right and wrong. They respect no one, whether their younger brother's wife, elder brother's wife, their own sister or anyone else. Moreover, they do not respect any of their relations by marriage."

Many of the *Deko* make a living out of the Santal, as the cat finds its sustenance in his home. The analogy is by no means perfect, and its chief value for the Santal is that it ministers to his self-respect. In the Bankura district many of the landlords of the Santals are Sundis, who are themselves classified as an Exterior or Scheduled caste. Their hereditary occupation is the distilling and selling of spirits, and they are usually the lessees of the government liquor and drug shops. They owe their present

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Folk-Tales*, Vol. III, Nos. 74 and 77.